



Water insecurity and emotional distress: Coping with supply, access, and seasonal variability of water in a Bolivian squatter settlement

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Abstract:

Recent research suggests that insecure access to key resources is associated with negative mental health outcomes. Many of these studies focus on drought and famine in agricultural, pastoral, and foraging communities, and indicate that food insecurity mediates the link between water insecurity and emotional distress. The present study is the first to systematically examine intra-community patterns of water insecurity in an urban setting. In 2004-2005, we collected interview data from a random sample of 72 household heads in Villa Israel, a squatter settlement of Cochabamba, Bolivia. We examined the extent to which water-related emotional distress is linked with three dimensions of water insecurity: inadequate water supply; insufficient access to water distribution systems; and dependence on seasonal water sources, and with gender. We found that access to water distribution systems and female gender were significantly associated with emotional distress, while water supply and dependence on seasonal water sources were not. Economic assets, social assets, entitlements to water markets, and entitlements to reciprocal exchanges of water were significantly associated with emotional distress, while entitlements to a common-pool water resource institution were not. These results suggest that water-related emotional distress develops as a byproduct of the social and economic negotiations people employ to gain access to water distribution systems in the absence of clear procedures or established water rights rather than as a result of water scarcity per se.

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Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Public

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Food/Water Security

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Freshwater, Urban

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Central/South America

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Mental Health/Stress

Mental Health Effect/Stress: Stress Disorder

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Children, Elderly, Low Socioeconomic Status

Other Vulnerable Population: Women

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content